

MARCHE CHASE PARK

Neighborhood Workshop # 2 February 26, 2004



MEETING REPORT

Workshop time: 6:30 to 8:30pm

Workshop location: Washington Elementary School Cafeteria, 3515 Harlow Rd.., Eugene Workshop facilitator: Philip Richardson, Landscape Architect, Parks Planning Section Other City staff present: Emily Proudfoot, Landscape Architect, Public Works Engineering

SUMMARY

City of Eugene Parks Planning staff hosted a second neighborhood workshop to evaluate a concept plan and prioritize features for Marche Chase Park. Improvements to the park are funded by the Parks and Open Space bond measure passed in 1998 by area residents. After a brief review of the first workshop report, a concept plan was presented. This was followed by a discussion of issues and ideas relating to the concept plan. Goals for the evening included getting feedback on the proposed plan, reaching consensus on a design and prioritizing development features. About 14 neighbors and interested parties, including City staff, attended the workshop.

ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisement for workshop #2 included the following:

- A postcard invitation was mailed on February 12th (14 days prior to the workshop) to 298 resident addresses within the park service area, but generally not including addresses north of MLK Jr. Blvd, which is not within the defined service area.
- Flyers were posted on site at the park, and where possible in the housing complexes north of MLK Jr. Blvd.
- Email invitations and postcard mailers were sent to other interested parties and stakeholders, including neighborhood leaders and city councilors.
- An article on the event was included in the February issue of the Council Newsletter.
- A news release was distributed on February 18th.
- The workshop was included on the City Manager's Office public meetings calendar
- The workshop was announced in the City/Region section of the Register Guard preceding the event.
- The Marche Chase Park web page and the POS online calendar of events.

PRESENTATION

Meeting participants convened at the Washington Elementary School Cafeteria. The following handouts were available: the meeting agenda, the concept plan, a concept plan comment sheet, and the final report of the first workshop. Additionally several catalogs of play equipment were available to browse. Participants were asked to sign in, and encouraged to fill out the comment sheet at the workshop or to send it in to the parks planning office afterwards (the comment sheet is available for downloading on our website

http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/pw/parks/Marche Chase/MRCH comments 2.pdf).

A brief introduction was given to the Parks and Open Space Plan and the role of Parks Planning in the development of POS projects over the next few years. It was explained that several larger play areas were scheduled to built in or near Marche Chase Park, including a regional play ground scheduled to be built at Alton Baker Park in 2005, and a larger neighborhood park at Chase Commons Park at the intersection of Garden Way and Commons Drive. The schedule for construction at Marche Chase Park was given as the summer of 2005. Goals for the meeting were stated as establishing consensus around the evaluation of the proposed draft concept plan, and establishing a general sense of priorities for improvements.

The planning process was then outlined briefly, and the results of the previous workshop were presented. The existing park site was quickly reviewed, including a description of the major elements such as circulation, access, existing trees, topography, areas of disturbance, etc. It was explained that there was very limited area in which any grading or development could be done, due to the large existing trees and their critical root zones, zoning setbacks, and topography. Then a draft concept plan was presented, including the general desires and issues as expressed during the first workshop, and how these were incorporated into the concept.

The concept plan included such desired elements as:

- Preservation and enhancement of virtually all the existing natural area. General clean-up, invasive and hazard plants removed, additional plantings of native trees and shrubs for habitat and ornamental value.
- Creative natural play features the downed logs would have their root wads removed, be cleaned up, repositioned slightly, and stabilized. Boulders could be added depending on the availability of appropriately large and safe specimens.
- An irrigated informal play field, properly graded.
- Keeping the existing fruit trees, pruned for health.
- An enhanced path across the south end. The path would be bark or gravel and would remain in approximately in its existing location although moved slightly north at points to maintain minimum zoning code setbacks, and to maintain a safe grade.
- Sidewalks to match existing ones. The planting strip would be irrigated, but street trees would be planted only on the more open west and northwest sides.
- A play area around 2000 square feet, one of the smallest in Eugene's park system. This area additionally would serve as a central gathering spot, with picnic table, bench, bike rack, trash receptacle, and drinking fountain.
- Buffering the more active areas from adjacent homes. On the south side, replacing the blackberries and non-native shrubs with native plants, and street trees on the sides closest to the play field and play ground.
- Main park sign, located on the major neighborhood street, surrounded by small planting bed, and one or more park rules signs installed at entrance points.

DISCUSSION

With a group of about 12 neighbors, the concept plan was thoroughly discussed. Most of the proposed enhancements to the park were favorably received by the majority of workshop attendees, but the small playground and its access path were opposed by many.

One attendee questioned why the 1998 Parks and Open Space bond measure included any funds for development of the park, saying that residents hadn't been asked about it. Staff explained that the park was donated to the City to serve as a neighborhood park, and that the 1989 Eugene Parks and Recreation Plan, which governs park planning efforts, listed development of Marche Chase Park as a high priority action. Staff also noted that many residents had expressed a desire for park development.

Most attendees agreed that the natural area needed cleaning up, and the idea of increasing the variety and number of native plants was popular. Many people spoke in favor of, and no one spoke against the idea of retaining and creating interesting natural features that had play and habitat value. Most were also supportive of retaining the logs if the root wads were removed. Several people thought that the addition of boulders in the area would provide additional interest and play value. A suggestion was made that a remaining 5' stump, could have hand and foot holds carved into it for climbing, staff notes that the jagged top would need to be sawn off, and that safety issues might affect what could be done, but that the concept of creatively using the remaining stumps would be pursued. Another possibility discussed was the creation of an artistic rough-hewn bench out of one of the remaining shorter sections of log.

The existing path at the south side of the park was discussed briefly. There was some support for continuing more of this kind of path through the natural area. Staff mentioned that a logical connection would be between the playground and the existing path, and that a looped path was possible but wasn't proposed due to the stated desire of neighbors to minimize the development impact in the natural area. Other considerations were the small size of the park, the budget, and three very large cottonwoods in the natural area: Black Cottonwood *Populus trichocarpa* is a large native tree which frequently loses limbs requiring any new paths to be located far enough away from them.

Continuing the existing neighborhood sidewalk around the park was also generally supported. Staff explained that sidewalks are critically important in that they allow year-round access to the park, or at least to its edge, for people not comfortable or able to walk across the natural topography. Participants were generally supportive of having a planting strip in between the street and the sidewalk rather than streetside sidewalks, although some felt that curbside sidewalks would simplify maintenance requirements. Staff explained that park designs try to maintain the same development characteristics as the surrounding neighborhoods where possible, and the Chevy Chase neighborhood does have planting strips with street trees. Additionally, a planting strip can provide a safer experience for pedestrians due to the greater distance between moving traffic and people, and because the addition of street trees can appear to make the street narrower thus slowing traffic.

Irrigated planting strips would also alleviate stated maintenance concerns about the edges of the park. Irrigated turf receives more regular mowing – about once every 7-10 days during the growing season. Other proposed irrigated turf in the concept plan included the flatter more disturbed areas outside the natural area on the west side of the park, including an informal play

field in the southwest corner. Several attendees expressed their desire for the play field turf to be comfortable to play on, similar to yards in the neighborhood, and as large as possible without negatively impacting trees or the natural area.

The discussion on trees covered several topics. Staff explained that a city arborist had visited the site and had found nothing immediately hazardous, but recommended that any dead limbs and snags be evaluated, and that a handful of specific trees be evaluated more closely: a large cherry tree which Mr. McKay also pointed out, a dead but suckering ash on the southern property edge, and the three large cottonwoods. Staff noted that where dead limbs or snags do not pose a hazard, they can be extremely valuable as wildlife habitat, and that some should be retained if possible for this reason. The existing fruit trees were retained in the concept plan, and most participants agreed with this, specifically mentioning that some neighbors used the fruit for baking. The proposed street trees were generally favored as they would further buffer the more active areas of the park from neighbors. A few participants wanted assurance that the species chosen wouldn't cause problems with sidewalks, as other street trees in the neighborhood had, and that any trees chosen not detract from the natural area. Staff made assurances that any street trees would be chosen carefully for appropriate characteristics, including potential sidewalk damage, and that native species would be considered as well.

Some attendees opposed to the playground and its concrete access paths, feeling that they were not necessary, would ruin the natural feel of the park, and would attract "outside" use. Staff explained that the park was donated to the city for use as a neighborhood park and that playgrounds and access to them were integral parts of serving the whole range of ages and abilities that parks are intended to serve. Staff also mentioned that neighborhood parks were designed to serve neighborhood residents within a ½ mile walking distance, and that features which encourage visitors from outside the neighborhood were not included. The amount of development proposed would almost certainly not lead to significant additional parking or traffic. Additionally, in the near future two much larger playgrounds will be built nearby – one near the intersection of Commons Drive and Garden Way, and another major regional playground at Alton Baker Park. Both of these parks would be much greater draws to parents and children.

Staff pointed out that the concept plan preserved and proposed improvements to nearly all the natural, relatively undisturbed portions of the site, and that development was proposed primarily on that portion of the site which had already been disturbed: the western more open portion of the park once had a house and had been re-graded during neighborhood development. The play area was also set back from the park edge to provide a wide buffer to adjacent houses. Street trees were proposed to provide additional visual buffering. It was also explained that many residents had indicated a desire for the amenities shown on the draft concept plan although it was evident that their opinions were not well represented by those attending the 2nd workshop.

Some participants expressed concern about the size and width of the concrete access path to the play area. The main concerns were that concrete was not seen as compatible with the "natural feel" of the park, and that it was aesthetically unappealing. Staff explained several reasons for the use of concrete in park settings, including relatively low cost, long-term durability, inert ingredients (as opposed to asphalt or other oil-based path treatments), and low maintenance (less need for weed control, surface repair, etc.). Given the city-wide concerns about park maintenance staff have strived to ensure that park improvements are designed to require minimal levels of maintenance. Staff did agree to explore minor alternatives to the path design, and to explore alternates such as stabilized aggregate or more naturally colored concrete.

As for play equipment, many participants spoke against having swing sets, although staff

mentioned that they were probably the most used of all play equipment put into parks, that they were one of the few types of equipment used by both children and adults, and that research indicates that swinging is important for early childhood development. There was strong support for trying out non-standard types of play apparatus, including the use of wood and natural materials, or natural-looking materials over colorful plastics. Participants felt strongly that any play equipment should blend in with the natural surroundings.

A few concerns about negative use were mentioned, some suggesting that any development would attract more negative use, and some feeling that during UO football game days the park would become a location for tailgate parties and would be abused. Staff explained that in virtually all recent neighborhood park projects, improving access and providing park amenities has increased the amount of positive, legitimate use. This has the direct effect of displacing many negative uses through several means, including identifying publicly owned and actively managed property, generating more contact between neighbors that strengthens the community, providing for more natural observation of the park, etc. Principles of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) were also briefly explained, and how they are applied to park designs to make them as safe and friendly as possible. As for UO football game days, staff indicated that some impact may be inevitable, but as it would only be a handful of days per year, the city could address quickly any problems as they arose.

The following is a general list of comments and ideas presented by participants during the workshop:

Access/Circulation

- Concrete walk is not good, too much concrete.
- An accessible path through the park with benches are needed for both small kids, parents, and people w/limited mobility.
- The concrete has too much visual impact, it should be reduced or better yet removed completely.
- Please consider adding pathways the meander through the trees, especially from Stonegate to the play area
- Please eliminate or at least minimize the use of concrete. Consider one way in and out to the playground or placing it closer to the street.
- Having the concrete path in the middle of the park is not good.

Facilities/Design

- Nancy Chase (Marche Chase's daughter) discussed Marche's desires for the site: to keep it mostly natural with not a lot of playground or other typical park type development, to have it be a place for Cub Scout camping and the like, to pay respect for the history of the site. A log cabin used to be there, and there was a lot of wildlife, skunks were regular visitors.
- Prefer no central playground but like the proposed ideas for creative and natural play. No need for swing sets, if residents want them they should have them in their backyards
- Like the proposed access, walks, natural area enhancements
- Liked the playground and questioned not having swings. Please consider that the park is for all ages and families.

- The proposed plan is not overkill and the playground is sized appropriately.
- Have benches at a gathering place.
- Take an unconventional approach, lets not have 'regular' playtoys, but more natural ones such as boulders, logs.
- Consider less than "traditional" approach to playgrounds, think outside the box.
- No lighting!
- Climbing structure is ok, but no swings.
- Prefer natural benches such as cut logs.
- Playground takes away from the natural character.
- The uncivilized nature of the development concept is what is best.
- Having a gathering place is a good and positive component, with picnic tables and benches, the play equipment may not be as important.
- We should respect this Chase Family gift and their desires for it.
- I support the concept and think you've done a good job meeting the desires of the neighborhood as reported in the first workshop.
- Adding concrete and a playground changes the basic nature of the site.

Vegetation

- Appropriate street tree choices, such as ones that will fit into the exisiting neighborhood and park character, won't damage the sidewalks or otherwise require lots of maintenance
- Liked the recent removal of non-native vegetation on the south side of the park, should continue to removed the invasive species like blackberry and ivy.
- Evaluate the existing tree health, at least two trees, an ash on the southwest side, and a cherry on the southeast side, probably need to be removed.\
- Cottonwoods may preclude placement of a path underneath them due to their proclivity to drop limbs.
- Nobody asked for this, you shouldn't do anything here except edge the vegetation along the curb regularly.
- Keep the apples and lilacs they're historical and contribute to the nice character.
- Please use native plants like Solomon's seal and wild larkspur.
- We need an area to play in the grass, to throw balls, kick balls and play catch.

Use Patterns

- Maintenance is my biggest concern, will it be maintained? The maintenance that was done in the past few months was the first in a long time.
- It is important to preserve the existing site drainage at the south edge of the park.
- Dog waste bags would be good, people don't pick up after their pets.
- On the eight football game days a year, the park could get misused or overused.

PRIORITIES

- 1. Preserve and enhance the natural area.
- 2. Provide access (sidewalks, paths)
- 3. Create a level grass informal field area.
- 4. Reduce the amount of visible development, keeping the park as natural as possible.
- 5. Be creative about the kinds of play features the park has. Clean up the logs and keep them. Make sure any play equipment blends as much as possible with the natural feel of the park.

FINDINGS

Based on feedback from workshop participants, and comment sheets, a most neighbors support the concept plan elements relating to access, natural area restoration, vegetation enhancement, play field improvements, natural play structures, and natural area paths. There was vocal opposition by many workshop attendees to the formalized play area with it's concrete access paths, but based on letters, comment sheets, emails and phone calls both prior to and following the second workshop, others express enthusiastic support for construction of a small play area and social gathering place as long as it blends with it's surroundings and is not overly obtrusive. Concrete should be minimized wherever possible.

CLOSING

Attendees were thanked for their participation, it was noted that the budget would also guide development options. Any construction would be scheduled for summer of 2005. Staff mentioned that a letter outlining further plans would likely be sent later in the year.

Participants or other interested parties are welcome to discuss the project or submit comments at any time via phone, email or delivered mail.

ATTENDEES:

The following parties were at the second workshop and signed in on the attendance sheet:

Nancy A. ChaseLois FryBob TallmanDoug McKayCraig WinetroutSteve AbbottTom RobertsJan WagnerMarie HolmJustin RobertsMike Hochstein

COMMENT SHEETS

The following comments were recorded on comment sheets provided at the workshop and turned in to City staff at the end of the event.

Total comment sheets handed in at meeting: 1

Total comment sheets, phone calls, emails received following the meeting: 12

1. Do you feel that the proposed concept plan fulfills **the needs of the neighborhood**? Why or why not?

- Yes. Improved access. Limited Development. The trees are kept. I appreciate the city using our voter approved measure to improve the park
- Yes and No we don't need a playground or a lot more trees actually we like the way it is naturally
- I believe the needs are not being met. The playground concept is not in the best interest of our neighborhood
- No, there is no need for a playground as our own ample yards are where our kids play on equipment. The park should be left a more natural state, just cleaned up a bit, it invites trouble and noise we don't want.
- It meets the needs of some neighbors. The idea of having a serene natural setting is not met. We expect the playground area to be omitted.
- Yes. A small playground for children ensures that the needs of families, many of which are too busy to have time to submit feedback or attend park meetings are represented.
- I would accept most features of the Concept Plan. It provides preservation and maintenance of the natural area with openness and provides for the managed care of existing and future trees. It provides for the planting of native trees, shrubs and ground covers as well as providing a buffer from surrounding residences. Plants that would cause undue maintenance should be avoided. It preserves existing apple trees. It includes removal of all blackberry and poison oak plants in the park. It provides easier access to the park and a place to socialize with friends.
- Thank you. I really like the direction you took the park, and am happy to see that you decided to include a children's playground!
- Sorry, but I haven't been able to make any of the meetings yet. I only have one comment, I like the concept plan and would just encourage you to make the play area also a place suitable for a small neighborhood gathering.
- No playground, no screeching kids.
- Sorry to miss the Marche Chase Park workshop on Feb. 26. I do have some concerns based upon my living on Regent Ave. for more than ten years. Our strongest concerns have to do with appearance and maintenance. Appearance: In the past the park has been moved a few times a year, which helps to keep it looking OK for a while. But even the mowing has not eliminated the ugly grasses and other growth that have gone over the curb, even down into the street in places. In order to eliminate this curb ugliness I suggest that the sidewalk be placed next to the curb rather than have a parking strip of soil next to the curb, which would require continued maint. A mower should be able to handle growth right up to the sidewalk and thus remove the possibility of growth over the curbs. I note that your most recent map shows the sidewalk with a parking strip as a continuation of existing sidewalks. The fact is that there are no sidewalks adjoining the park property at present on the Chevy Chase side, only the Stonegate side. This could then give more freedom to the design of the sidewalk location so that the park's appearance at the curbs would not require extra maintenance effort. The map indicates that trees would be planted in the parking strip. Such trees could be placed inside the sidewalk rather than in the parking strip and still give shade and beauty to the park. Maintenance around the trees could possibly be arranged so that mowing might be done around them with the big mowers. Maintenance: I guess I have included my concern about maintenance in my comments above. One additional thing comes to mind about grass at the corner of Regent Av.e and Chevy Chase. Because grass grows high so rapidly, especially in the spring Bob Tallman, who lives at that corner across from the park, has often cut the grass so that drivers can see

cars coming from the left as they approach Chevy Chase. High grass there at the corner can be a safety hazard. In designing and/or maintaining the park, attention should be given to how best to have good visibility for drivers as they approach this intersection. Bob may not be able to continue cutting the grass there. The above may sound that I am not pleased about what you and the City are planning to do to improve the use of Marche Chase Park. My wife and I are very pleased and I make my concerns known in a spirit of helpfulness and support.

- 2. Are there any important park features **missing** from the proposed concept plan?
 - No
 - No!
 - I think rather than a playground a group of boulders or large rocks should be placed in about the same location. Bark paths should be available so children and their families could get to the area.
 - You're missing the point by making it too planned and structured.
 - The idea of boulders for children to climb on, near the logs was missing from the plan. The idea of not having large concrete sidewalks through the middle of the park was missing also.
 - Wildlife that is safe from domestic predators would be a nice addition. Wooden bat dens mounted high on some of the trees would help cut down on the mosquito population and provide interesting wildlife viewing at dusk during summer months. Birdhouses that blend into the forest would attract migratory and families of birds that would increase the population of birds in local backyards.
 - Birdhouses for song birds would be especially nice.
 - The Concept Plan shows a wide concrete path leading to the small playground from Regent Ave. and from Chevy Chase St. It has been my experience hat such a concrete surface path would entice skateboarders in the area (there are quite a few) to use it and to jump onto benches, and even tables etc. causing severe damage noise, and create a disturbing atmosphere for this area. The Concept Plan does not include barriers such as concrete posts at the two entrances to these paths to prevent the path from being used by motorized vehicles. New "Park Rules" signs need to be installed on all three sides of the park, including a sign at each entrance to the proposed path described above.
 - Bat houses
 - A few hills. Oakmont park has some great man-made hills designed for up and down play. My toddler son loves those hills, and I think even among bigger kids and adults they will be a draw because often people like to lie down on a summer day and the highest point in the park.
- 3. What is the **most important** park feature (that should be included no matter what)? List at least three of your highest priorities, in order of importance (1=most important).
 - 1. Access trails and sidewalks and benches. Access for maintenance, strollers, walkers, tricycles, young and old. 2. Improved maintenance (grass and grade) 3. Trees.
 - Sidewalks around it.
 - 1. Very informal "creative" play areas i.e. logs, boulders. 2. Regular maintenance. 3. Replacement trees.
 - As a parent of three kids, it is very important for them to have a small bit of forest in a city. Don't get too open. If we want play equipment we use our own. Keep it

natural. I wouldn't like seeing children 'sent' to a park to play unsupervised. This is not what our neighborhood wants.

- 1. Natural setting minimum impact on environment, minimum amount of concrete 2. Safety 3. Upkeep 4. Doggie-doo stations at all entrances.
- 1. A small playground for children aged 2-12 2. "Dogs on leash" sign 3. Tall fir trees
- 1. Preservation and maintenance of existing natural open areas. 2. The installation of facilities, walkways, and other items that increase the usefulness of the park as a neighborhood without attracting large groups of people from outside the neighborhood. 3. Maintain the cleanliness and maintenance of all areas in the park on a regularly scheduled basis.
- Control invasive species, and enhance the park's natural value. Have a seating area, with drinking fountain, and non-hardened paths.
- 4. What park features are **least important**? List at least three of your lowest priorities, in order of least importance (1=least important).
 - Playground equipment
 - No playground we all have our own yard toys and don't appreciate the noise and intrusion on the tranquility of the park – no trees along the street – they just mess with the cement and make street messy – additional landscaping not really necessary
 - 1. Playground 2. Sidewalks through the middle of the park
 - Uniformity of trees along stree, plan looks far too typical, not what this area was intended for.
 - 1. Playground and large concrete walkways in the interior.
 - N/A
- 5. Would you be interested in participating in a volunteer effort related to the park? What type? (Some possibilities might be tree and shrub planting or care, trail building, care of natural areas, park patrol, etc.)
 - Yes, Planting and trail building, perennial bed maintenance.
 - Yes. Trail building and planting
 - Yes! all of the above.
 - If you build it, they will come along with trash and problems. If you think it needs to be patrolled and extra maintenance is involved, I think it sounds like a bad idea you need to resolve.
 - As long as we live here, I would be happy to participate
 - Absolutely. All of the above.
- 6. Any other comments?
 - If we're so tight on money why do anything to it We all like it the way it is.
 - Thank you for your patience with the ignorant and negative people. I want nice parks, and I'm willing to vote for their support.
 - Please no playground or concrete sidewalks within the park
 - The ironic thing is the new school being built for all of our neighborhood children is in desperate need of play equipment. The funds for this project would be welcomed at the new Northside location where it could be of more use by all who would like to use it.

- I like your efforts to make the park useful to all ages, not just dog walkers, but seniors and parents with strollers and toddlers.
- I feel that the neighbors whose property adjoins or is across from this park have the most to gain or lose by this project. The sidewalks around the outside of the park should be adequate for access for people with disabilities, strollers, bikes. I think the central playground area will ruin the ambiance of a lovely natural setting. Looking out at an 8 foot sidewalk every morning will ruin it for me! I beliveve the playground will become a gathering spot for people from out of the are who are up to "no good". The park could become a party place disaster area on UO game days. On the positive side: I think the border of sidewalks and trees is appropriate and will enhance the area. I think the upgraded turf in the informal play area is also appropriate. The work crew who has cleared berry vines and ivy did a nice job. Will a crew continue that sort of maintenance?
- The dog droppings in the park continues to be a problem. It is hard to walk out there without stepping in some, I think Doggie-doo stations with bags should be installed at all entrances.
- Due to the time constraints and information overload facing families of young children, the needs of neighborhood children are not adequately represented by the people attending the meetings. I believe this is because the park as it is now is ideal for dog owners. There is no incentive to pick up one's dog excrement since there is an expectation that ¼ of the park is an informal dog park, only without the rules inherent to a dog park. If the dog-owners have their way with this park, it will remain a park that is attractive almost solely to them and nobody else, and especially not to young families who would like to see a park that benefits children first, dogs second.
- The installation of new facilities in the west part of the park will require yearly increased maintenance, such as increased mowing, facility maintenance, increased tree care, and a regularly scheduled crew for trash removal.
- Please don't let the older negative neighbors stop the rest of us from having a place to go with our young children, a small playground it not going to be a nuisance but an asset and will make this neighborhood an even more desirable place to live.
- I appreciate your time and effort in communicating the City's plans concerning the Marche Chase neighborhood park.